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25 APR 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Director-Comptroller

SUBJECT: Records, Archives, and History

1. Your undated memorandum on the above subject and DD/P 72-0560, dated 4 February 1972, are indicative of our joint concern regarding records, their service to Agency needs, and their ultimate disposition. We are all too well aware of the proliferation of paper and, in recent times, the emergence of sensitive documents, including those of the CS, in the public media. Our efforts to contend effectively with records as regards both quality and quantity have been a continuing process in the Clandestine Service. Our charter and assigned responsibilities dictate that CS documentation be varied in type, magnitude, and availability. Indeed, CS production and exploitation of paper makes it the largest manager of records in the Agency. Because this is so, we have been engaged longer than our counterparts in applying records systems against this dynamic problem. Moreover, we believe that, whatever our level of competence in this area may be, it is certainly broader and probably superior to that of the other directorates. In addition, the CS feels it has most at stake, as indicated by the formation of Information Services Division as a major Directorate component.

2. Despite our priorities and attained expertise in several of these areas, we have by no means found ultimate solutions--nor are we likely to. We have no doubt that some remedial steps are in order. However, prior to setting up any new system, we should identify in very precise terms what is wrong with current systems--lest we, in haste, discard some worthwhile aspect or strike out into directions that will prove counter-productive.

3. In that spirit, we gladly join you in probing for alternatives. I am afraid, however, that this Directorate has very serious reservations about several aspects of the proposals embodied in referent memorandum. First, the paper does not discuss what is right or wrong with present

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Agency programs in Records Management, Archives, and History and, instead, pegs its case for Agency level intercession on the need for a "reporting system which will indicate the degree to which minimum standards are met by all units, and a mechanism by which units can profit by interchange of experience and by sharing solutions." The general thrust of the memorandum appears to retain and even expand upon existing programs, boards, and officials with major increase in reporting. I endorse the desire to modify the Records Management and History programs, and to establish an Archives program, and coordinate each on an Agency-wide basis--but not as common commodities of equal moment and urgency. Rather, each should be considered separately on its own merits and relative importance. In our judgment about the only thing these three fields have in common is their dependence on the record itself, and they have this in common with management, operations, analysis and reports writing. What we have is an organization and management problem, not one of designing a system. Both Archives and History Writing would fall into place readily enough, and the performance of many other disciplines would be enhanced by better and more comprehensive Records Management.

4. Meeting records needs of the future is only part of the problem. The CS must contend with what is needed currently to support ongoing and emerging activities while responding to legal requirements, servicing U.S. Government common concern responsibilities, and protecting critical security aspects. The cost is not and will not be modest: paper is not cheap. We have no illusions that constant review, study, and resourceful manipulation of documentation can mean minimum input in terms of manpower and funds. Effective management requires equipment capitalization matched with a mix of personnel. As we all know, an increase in one permits some trade-off flexibility in the other, and in the end the optimum solution lies in greater investment in efficient hardware, coupled with greater discipline in records management on the part of all staff personnel.

5. The memorandum very correctly recognizes that decentralization of responsibilities in Records Management, Archives, and History is essential. Differences in Directorate purposes, differences in documentation, and compartmentation all contribute to this logic but, different

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though we are and compartmented though we may be, there is at least one interlocking element that especially concerns the Clandestine Service. I refer to the significant spill-over of knowledge, and information about CS programs and operations among other Directorates. For example, the Support Directorate, in meeting our finance, training, logistics, and communications needs has accumulated extensive detail on sensitive field operations. As of now, the CS has too little (if any) influence over data relative to its activities but held by others. Decentralization, however it may be formulated, must assure CS overview and control over this kind of information. I invite your attention to histories prepared unilaterally by the Offices of Communications and Finance as examples of what I have in mind. I intend to offer more specific observations after the Counter Intelligence Staff completes an inquiry into security considerations evolving from the Historical Program.

6. Paragraph 5 of the proposed memorandum contains major implications for the CS and the Agency as a whole. My comments are admittedly frank, but I think you would not want them otherwise. They are keyed to the several sections of the paragraph.

5. (a) Records Management

As described in the three subsections of the paragraph, the Records Management Board would continue as is but be given access to the Executive Director and be made the instrument for supervision of Agency records management and the channel for periodic records management reports.

This leaves the Board-Records Administration Officer in a standard staff capacity diluted by the committee approach. The Board has been functioning for some three years now with access to the ExDir and with very disappointing results. Ability and inexperience have been contributing factors, but the basic flaw lies in the prevailing assumption that Records Management is an administrative or support function. It cannot be, for it is too closely allied with the purposes of the component concerned and with management itself.

I urge you, therefore, to consider adopting a command channel mechanism that originates from your immediate office. I suggest that this may be done by your naming a special assistant

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to yourself whose purview is Agency records. The nominee should have as much experience as possible in ongoing systems and the variety of hard record produced by the Agency. Again, since the CS has wrestled with the problem longest and has the most complex responsibilities, I would make every effort to provide an appropriately qualified super-grade operations officer to fill such a post.

5. (b) Annual Reports

The CS views the Annual Program Submission as a documentation of programs and resource requirements for budgetary purposes which in the end emerges in an external (albeit somewhat protected) presentation to OMB and the Congress. To reduce the Submission to a vehicle for add-ons, in this instance historical reporting, is to divert it from the important management and budgetary purpose.

I would also expect the quality of the Program Submission to suffer to the extent that energies would be shared with this new and large requirement.

There is also a time factor. As is, the Program preparation is concentrated into a relatively short period, with attendant pressures to meet approaching deadlines. To add historical detail to what already must be done will work against the impact of the Program. If in the end resources are ultimately prejudiced we will have been ill served.

The draft memorandum infers that the annual sketches should be sufficiently detailed to serve internal Agency needs and permit the writing of analytical histories using the reviews as source material. To array such detail is no small task and the effort will inevitably fall short of intended goals.

Congressional and public media queries are usually directed at specific incidents, operations, or persons. Any response that the Agency would choose to make will undoubtedly require,

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as in the past, the preparation by the appropriate area desk of an additional special paper for background use or release. Certainly no annual historical summary can include the minutiae that would be responsive in such instances.

We should not lose sight of the considerable information already included in the Program Submission. In the past, the CS has highlighted its accomplishments, problems, failures, and old and new programmatic directions in overview and summary sections of the submission. These afford a ready reference to major events in the CS on an annual basis and do in part suggest areas and activities for further research and historical treatment.

5. (c) Archives

The Archives program is not functioning as well as the Agency might like. This state originates from the fact that most Directorates have inadequate Records Management programs and leave much of the disposition of managerial and policy paper to the discretions of the individual offices. It would be more productive to provide broad, systematic guidance applicable to all records and let true archival material come out in the wash in the guise of permanent retention material. Otherwise, it is rather difficult to identify archival material using so brief a time frame as a single year. A more normal route is to classify certain types of documents as being of permanent value to be retained indefinitely. Subsequently, Archives derive from them at some much later date.

5. (d) History

As indicated in earlier paragraphs, Plans Directorate has some precise notions regarding history. So far, the CS historical effort has been larger than the rest of the Agency combined. The manpower allocated to the program in the future will necessarily be reduced, and we shall seek more

highly qualified writers than heretofore. If a qualified writer is not available we will, more likely than not, forego the project for the time being.

The Directorate will have no problem in emphasizing subject histories although it will continue, as resources permit, the compilation of selected organizational/station histories. I note that the illustrative list of possible subjects are Clandestine Service involvements, but I am sure this is not to infer that the work of other major elements of the Agency, even though it might appear to be less dramatic, will be overlooked. To indicate the future thrust of the CS History Program, I attach a copy of a recent directive to major CS components.

At the risk of being repetitious, it is the CS view that its historical papers are primarily intended (1) to brief CIA and CS management and operational personnel; (2) for use in training CS operations officers; and (3) for other miscellaneous uses within the CS and, as appropriate, within the Agency as a whole. Also, compilation of histories should permit reduction of stored paper.

The concept that the papers are primarily a source of information for answers to external queries would severely inhibit the preparation of CS histories and would inevitably result in the purge of significant information from the drafts submitted for publication.

7. Final comment is reserved for the two concluding sentences of the memorandum. For convenience they are:

"In other cases, however, a one-time effort to catch up to the current annual report system will be necessary and this will be undertaken by the unit in question. This activity will be supervised by the Agency Historian and Archivist."

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As indicated earlier, reduced manpower and the question of available writing talent are requiring us to downgrade the priority of our History Program. However, this necessity is not without its probable compensations. Better prepared chronicles on more selective subjects are a reasonable expectation. Moreover, in some cases, postponement will afford greater detachment, clearer perspective and, in the end, lead to more balanced presentations. Certainly, whatever is undertaken in the History Program, it should not impact unfavorably upon the vital Records Management considerations that directly affect the conduct of Agency business.

The final sentence is crucial, if this means direct and detailed involvement of the Chief, CIA Historical Staff, in the management of the CS historical program (as during the past two years). If so, the incumbent should be most carefully chosen and bring to the position, in addition to scholarly qualifications, an intimate understanding of CIA and CS structures, policies, and problems.

8. I hope this lengthy response will be useful to you. Reservations and problem areas have been raised, but we are in common agreement that programs can and should be improved. The key to the complex is Records Management and, while I feel that the optimum mechanisms and guidelines have yet to be found, I and those CS officers most concerned will gladly participate in any study forum that can contribute to solutions.

25 APR 1972

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Thomas H. Karamessines  
Deputy Director for Plans

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